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Congress Likely to pass Kennedy's National Community Service Measure

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Legislative Activity

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Congress Likely to Pass Kennedy's National Community Service Measure

A bill by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), the National and Community Service Act, S.1430, should have little trouble gaining congressional approval next session, unless President Bush's Points-of-Light Initiative can muster sufficient support within Congress to challenge it. Kennedy's proposal recently gained strength as a bipartisan effort when Sen. James Jeffords (R-Vt.) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) signed on in mid-November as the 22nd and 23rd co-sponsors.

Over twenty national service-related bills were introduced in the first session of the 101st Congress. Components of many of these bills ended up in S.1430, which further suggests that the bill stands very good chances of being sent to the White House for presidential approval sometime next year. The bill proposes some serious steps toward increasing citizen involvement in national service programs, with a special emphasis on attracting younger Americans. The following is a summary of the bill.

S.1430—The National and Community Service Act of 1989: A Summary

Objectives

The goals of S.1430 are to produce one billion extra hours of volunteer work over the next five years by renewing the ethic of civic responsibility of U.S. citizens; to build on the existing organizational framework of federal, state, and local programs and to expand full- and part-time service opportunities; to encourage younger and older Americans to commit to service by removing barriers and offering incentives for participation; to involve volunteers in services that are not performed by employed workers, or where human, educational, environmental, or public safety needs still go unmet.

Date Introduced

July 27, 1989.

Budget Authority

1990	\$178 million
1991	\$502 million
1992	\$567 million
1993	\$627 million
1994	\$532 million

Accompanying Legislation

S.1430 is a compendium of numerous bills, including S.3, the Citizenship and National Service Act; S.232, the American Conservation Corps Act; S.322, the Youth Service Corps Act; S.382, the Business and Citizen School Volunteer of America Act; S.408, the National Community Service Act; S.539, S.540, and S.541, the Loan Deferments and Forgive-

ness Acts; S.576, the Voluntary National Service and Education Demonstration Program Act; S.650, the Service to America Act; S.689, the Kids Helping Kids Act; S.781, the National Service Act; S.1464, the Volunteers In Service To America (VISTA) Expansion Act; and S.1465, the National Older American Volunteer Programs Expansion Act.

Alternative Positions

Rep. Augustus Hawkins (D-Calif.), chairman, and Rep. William Goodling (R-Pa.), ranking minority member, of the House Committee on Education and Labor have presented a different position based on testimony brought before the committee. Hawkins and Goodling have determined that: they reject the idea of linking service to student financial aid; any federal service program should include adequate labor protections regarding job displacement; service programs must include job training and compensatory education as needed; and, with the numerous service efforts already in existence, new federal initiatives must build on, rather than replace, current opportunities.

Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Dan Coats (R-Ind.), Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.), and Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) have offered a different kind of opposition. They have said that the bill fails to promote the type of volunteerism necessary, and that the bill only focuses on the creation of full-time, low-income work. The senators also stated that volunteerism, as contemplated in the bill, will become an activity for only "the very young, the very old, or a privileged few in-between who are uniquely able to devote the majority of their time to

being a 'paid volunteer.' " They also dissent with S.1430 because of what they consider to be a lack of flexibility in the ways state or local governments may fund or design their own programs suitable for specific needs.

Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) also doubts that S.1430 properly addresses the issue of national service. She believes that \$300 million simply does not exist, and if such funds were to become available, they could be better spent on other programs. She holds that compensation for service defeats the notion of volunteerism, and that volunteering should be a lifelong desire rather than a two-year commitment for the purpose of reducing one's student loans or receiving some other form of compensation. She says that the renewed focus on service can best be developed through a sense of individual responsibility and not by the creation of another bureaucracy and federal programs which duplicate current operations.

President Bush was expected to present a national service proposal along the lines of Youth Engaged in Service (YES) to America mentioned in his inaugural address. The YES to America proposal has currently taken a back seat to the Points-of-Light Initiative—a product of the White House's recently formed Office for National Service. The \$50 million per-year Points-of-Light Initiative will hold up successful local social programs as examples in order to encourage other community groups to duplicate them. This initiative will focus on media publicity as a means to increase community involvement. None of the \$50 million budget, half of which will come from federal funds, is expected to fund grants for programs.

Scope of the Problem

Numerous essential social needs such as care for children, the homeless, the elderly, the poor, and the handicapped, are going unmet due in large part to federal spending restrictions and a lack of civic responsibility among the nation's population. The prevailing attitude in Congress is that the federal government, as well as meeting the serious social needs that exist, must be the leading organizer and supporter of volunteer programs in order to make the ethic of service a regular component of American life.

Many experts also contend that some form of compensation is needed to encourage participation in national service. For example, recent college graduates are

often unable to volunteer part-time due to debt in the must begin

Contact

The Community Resource Office Building
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Sources

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Title-by-Title

Title I—Service

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often unable to join full-time service or volunteer programs because of the large debt in the form of student loans they must begin to repay.

Contact

The Committee on Labor and Human Resources, SD-428 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510; (202) 224-5375.

Sources

S.1430; Report, Additional and Minority Views on S.1430; *Congressional Record*, July 27, 1989, p.S 9003-21; Congressional Update by Augustus Hawkins and William Goodling; National Association of Service and Conservation Corps; Youth Service America; *Education Week*, 2/22/89; *U.S. News and World Report*, 2/13/89, p. 20-6; *The New York Times*, 1/22/89, p. 24; *Newsweek*, 12/11/89, p. 49.

Title-by-Title Summary

Title I—School Based Community Service

Authorizes the Department of Education to fund states for the purpose of creating or expanding service opportunities for youths, senior citizens, businesses and community members.

Grants will be made to states on the basis of the number of students enrolled in its elementary and secondary schools, the quality of its proposal, and the evidence of its commitment to the program. State proposals must describe how service programs will be coordinated, especially regarding the cooperation among education institutions, local government agencies, community-based agencies, businesses, and state agencies. States must also assure that service opportunities will be available to a broad range of individuals and organizations.

The two main categories for programs under this title are, student community service programs, and school volunteer and educational partnership programs. Student community service will involve youth, those both in and out of school, in meaningful and constructive service to the community. School volunteer programs will encourage older citizens and businesses to work with at-risk or disadvantaged students.

The service participation of college students and recent graduates is encouraged. The innovative projects for community services and student financial independence program which is admini-

stered by the fund for the improvement of postsecondary education is expanded. Also, the incentive for higher education institutions to use work-study funds for community service-learning programs is increased. A 50 percent set-aside for community service in the state student incentive grant programs, for funds appropriated above \$75 million is created. Finally, a partial loan cancellation in Perkins and Stafford Loan Programs for persons performing full-time community service is allowed.



Sen. Kennedy

Title II—Youth Service Corps

Creates or expands full-time or summer youth service corps programs. States may apply for grants in order to start programs. Grants are awarded to states by the Board of Directors for the Corporation for National Service which is established under Title IV of this bill.

Youth service corps programs are open to youths ages 16-25 for year-round programs and to youths ages 15-21 for summer programs.

Work will involve conservation service on public lands, human service, including work in nursing homes, hospitals, government agencies, libraries, parks, day care centers, schools, law enforcement agencies, and other private nonprofit social service organizations.

Programs must offer in-service and post-service education, and training benefits between \$50 and \$100 per week served. Also, participating youths will receive a stipend of 100 percent of the poverty line, or 100 percent of the minimum wage.

Title III—National Service Demonstration Program

The Board of Directors of the Corporation for National Service will make grants to states to run civilian service programs for those citizens 17 years and older. Participants are to perform national service to meet unmet educational, human, environmental, and public safety needs, especially those relating to poverty.

Part-time volunteers will not be compensated. Full-time participants are to re-

ceive stipends equal to 100 percent of the poverty line or more than 100 percent of minimum wage. Health insurance will also be provided. Two year, full-time participants will be awarded an \$8,500 voucher good toward education or purchase of a home. Likewise, those participating for three to six years full-time will receive vouchers of \$3,000 per year of service.

Title IV—Corporation For National Service

Creates the new Corporation for National Service and its Board of Directors. The purpose of the corporation is to administer and evaluate youth service corps and national service programs, and to authorize state advisory boards for national and community service.

The eleven member Board of Directors is to be appointed by the president with Senate approval. Three members are to be chosen from those nominated by the Speaker of the House, and three are to be chosen from those nominated by the Senate majority leader. No more than six members are to be from the same political party. Members are to be eminent citizens from the fields of community service, youth service, education, civic affairs, business, labor, or military service. Board members are to serve for seven years. Compensation for board members is to be limited to reasonable traveling expenses.

Title V—Expansion of Volunteers in Service To America

Authorizes the expansion of volunteers in service to America (VISTA), a national, full-time, anti-poverty program. Additional appropriations should dramatically increase the number of VISTA volunteers over a four-year period, so that by 1993, the program should claim 4,800 participants.

Title VI—National Older Americans Volunteer Programs

Increases the participation of older citizens in target service areas. Those areas of service specified are child care, drug-abuse prevention, respite care, teenage parents, literacy, care for the frail elderly, adult disabled, and adults with chronic illnesses.

Programs to be expanded are the retired senior volunteer program, the foster grandparent program, and the senior companion program. Makes no changes in compensation for these programs.